

## **The Prayer of the Two Mothers**

### **A Homily by Fr. Mario Villaraza, SDB**

The 70s was characterized by student activism throughout the world: the US anti-Vietnam protest, Canada's students calling for expansion of education to tertiary level, our own Salesian students of theology in one of our seminaries in Europe walked out calling for their professors to step down, and in the Philippines, students fighting against Marshal Law.

My brother, Vicente, then a university student, insisted to go to the University of Santo Tomas in Manila to attend Mass; but mom said "No, better stay home." But he insisted and left. My mom could not do anything but to go to her little altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Help of Christians (her great devotion) and entrusted my brother to her protection.

While walking towards the Chapel of the University of Santo Tomas to attend Mass, at that time, just outside the university was a clash between students and the military. Students broke into the gate of the University of Santo Tomas to escape from the soldiers who had already positioned themselves and started firing.

Students were running in all direction inside the campus and were shouting "Get down! Get down!" My brother simply sat down. He saw students falling one by one felled by bullets. He felt a bullet whooshing on his right ear and another on his left ear. He simply froze in fear and the only thing he was able to say: "Mary Help of Christians, pray for us"—the prayer often repeated to us by our mom. After the carnage, he was alone seated on the street of the campus and around him were dead or wounded students.

My brother, Vicente, realized he was alive, not a scratch. For him, he was saved by the prayer of the two mothers: my mom's and Jesus' mom.

He never told this to anyone but, only after 40 years, for the homily that I would deliver for the funeral of our mom Elena on November 13, 2015.

Mary Help of Christians, pray for us.